

# Chapter 8: Maintaining Program Funding

This chapter discusses ***how programs have successfully convinced law enforcement agencies, school districts, and elected and appointed municipal and county officials to provide funding***. The chapter concludes with four case studies of programs that have been especially innovative, hard working, or successful in maintaining funding.

## How to Motivate Law Enforcement Agencies to Maintain Funding

Police departments and sheriff's agencies report they provide funding for SROs because the program:

- (1) reduces the workload of patrol officers or road deputies;
- (2) improves the department's image and the image of its officers among juveniles;
- (3) creates and maintains improved relationships with the schools; and
- (4) improves and maintains the department's reputation in the community.

## Reduce the Burden on Patrol Officers or Road Deputies

SRO programs reduce the burden on their patrol officers:

- (1) by making it unnecessary for principals and assistant principals to call 911 or the law enforcement agency's nonemergency number to handle problems in the schools and
- (2) by preventing problems in the schools that otherwise would have required a police response.

### *Reduce the Number of Time-Consuming 911 and Nonemergency Calls From the Schools*

Before they began their SRO programs, many police and sheriff's departments contacted for the study reported that they had had to send patrol officers or road deputies to schools to handle problems several times a week or even several times a day, sometimes tying up the officers or deputies for hours at a time. As a result, law enforcement administrators felt, or subsequently discovered, that ***placing officers in the schools as SROs would—and did—reduce and even eliminate 911 and other calls for service for regular patrol officers***. The drastic reduction or complete elimination of these calls from schools is a major reason some departments in the study are willing to help pay for their programs.

- The chief of the Garner, North Carolina, Police Department reported that the number one reason he fought so hard for the SRO position was that road officers "were already having to spend a number of hours a week investigating crimes at the school; it only made sense to position an officer at the school full time."

- According to Sergeant Paul Marchand, the program supervisor in Salem, New Hampshire, "We pay for the program because, by assigning officers to the schools, we free up manpower on the street. Before we had SROs, we were constantly sending patrol officers to the schools. It makes sense from a deployment point of view to have officers in the schools rather than send over patrol officers whenever there is a problem. The high school has 2,300 kids and 200 staff; it's a small town."
- Based on an analysis of 911 calls in 1999 before the program began and again in 2001 after the SROs were in the schools, the Stark County Sheriff's Office in Ohio documented that that road deputies were spared having to respond to approximately 280 calls in 2001 because SROs handled them (see the discussion on "Empirical Evidence" below for additional information about these data).
- The assistant chief of a police department reported that, at a meeting on department budget cuts that he was going to be attending, he was not going to even raise the idea of cutting the SRO program. "While some department personnel feel the program takes too many officers away from patrol duties," he observed, "they don't realize the calls SROs take and prevent. SROs deal with problems which would otherwise go to 911."

The program may benefit other bureaus in the agency. West Orange, New Jersey, Police Department administrators reported that funding three additional SROs to work full time at the middle and high schools reduced the juvenile bureau's workload. SROs now initially respond to many incidents that detectives previously handled. As a result, the bureau's officers have more time available to respond to other juvenile problems. Some SROs are able to pass on to the detective bureau or patrol division valuable information about crimes in the community that students—and even staff—with whom the SROs have a good rapport are willing to report.

#### *Prevent Crimes That Would Have Required a Police Response*

In addition to freeing up patrol officers from responding to 911 calls from the schools, Salem, New Hampshire, Police Chief Paul Donovan expected the SROs to be proactive and **prevent** problems. Indeed, many agencies in the study have concluded that, ***because SROs prevent trouble that would have ended up resulting in a 911 or nonemergency call, the program reduces the burden on patrol officers even more.***

SROs prevent problems that might otherwise result in 911 or nonemergency calls in three ways.

- Students come to realize that, with an SRO stationed in the school, ***they are likely to be arrested if they commit a crime*** because an officer is there to witness it—or because faculty or other students are quick to report the behavior to the SRO without the need to call the police department or sheriff's office (an important element of effective community policing—involving the community in crime prevention).
- SROs report over and over again that "good kids"—and even some troublemakers—will tell the officers when they feel a crime is going to happen so it can be prevented because ***they feel a sense of duty to protect their schools or for their own personal safety they do not want criminal behavior occurring in their schools***. Former high school principal Paul Houlihan in Palm Beach County said, "I can't count the number of times in the past that this kind of prevention work with student informants has prevented more serious problems from breaking out on campus."
- ***The improved communication that an SRO program creates between the law enforcement agency and school district results in "extracurricular" sharing of information that helps to prevent crime.*** An SRO in West Orange said, "The transfer of intelligence between the schools and the [juvenile] bureau has allowed the department to respond proactively to potential youth-related problems. If there has been a fight between students over the weekend and the bureau believes the dispute may carry over to school on Monday, the SRO reports this to school administrators even before classes begin so they can take steps to prevent anything from developing."

### **Improve the Image of the Police Among Juveniles**

Many law enforcement administrators contacted for the study report that one of their most important goals in putting SROs in the schools is ***to improve juveniles' attitudes and behavior toward police officers*** (e.g., in terms of reporting crime). Most of these police administrators report that their programs accomplished this goal. Chief Paul Donovan reported that "I have walked through school hallways with the SRO, and kids come up to me asking to talk about problems—I was amazed kids would do that; it showed a lot of respect."

### **Create and Maintain Improved Police-School Relationships**

A number of police and sheriff's departments support SROs in part because ***they value the improved relationships that typically result between the agency and the school district***. For example, the Salem police chief, captain, and program supervisor all report that the program changed what was an adversarial relationship between the two entities into a collaborative one. According to Chief Donovan:

I can pick up the phone and talk right away to the superintendent [of schools]. There's a trust because they know us, so they are much more comfortable bringing the department into the schools. They also bring us problems they might not have shared with us in the past. Principals and the superintendent now call the captain about potential issues that could come up, such as problems with a teacher: "Here's what we've got; what should our next steps be?" Before the SRO program began, the schools would have handled the problem on their own and maybe ruined a chance to do a decent investigation. When the superintendent gets calls from elementary school principals on these types of issues, he now tells them to call us. If we didn't have SROs, the school department would not have invited the captain to serve on the Best Schools Initiative for the middle school with teachers, administrators, and parents, to develop goals for the schools.

### **Maintain or Improve the Agency's Reputation**

Finally, personnel in several departments testified that ***the program has improved the agencies' image*** in three different respects.

#### *Provide Positive Publicity for the Chief or Sheriff*

Although no sheriff made this observation, other agency personnel said that ***the program enhanced their sheriff's bid for reelection***. According to a member of one sheriff's office, "There are a large number of school employees who vote in the county." Another member of the agency reported that the sheriff benefits from the national attention the program gets as an exemplary program.

#### *Avoid Courting Public Criticism If the Program Is Cancelled*

A number of program personnel reported that ***the public would hold it against any chief or sheriff who stopped supporting the program***. When one police department's COPS in Schools grant ran out, the department absorbed the cost. When later in the year the city manager ordered a five percent cut in every department, the chief decided to axe the crime prevention unit completely. Why did he keep the SRO program? According to a staff member, "He took tremendous flak for cutting the prevention unit; taking cops out of the schools would have resulted in an even worse backlash from the community."

### **Accommodate the Wishes of Local Government**

Some agencies continue to fund the program because ***local government officials want to see it maintained***. For example, just as some sheriffs may feel that terminating the program is politically dangerous because voters could object, some police chiefs find dropping the program risky because the town officials who

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appoint them want to keep it going. When one police department's COPS in Schools grants expired, the chief picked up the entire cost of the program. According to a member of the department, one reason the chief was willing to foot the bill was because "it helps a lot that the mayor supports the program—he provides the department's money. Since the mayor appoints the chief, the chief accepts the elected official's request."

## How to Motivate the Schools to Contribute (More) Funding

As the previous chapter documents, many programs have been supported partially and, in some cases, substantially with school district funding. Indeed, ***support from school administrators has been crucial to keeping some programs afloat.***

- According to Al Weidner, budget director for the Sarasota County School Board, "I have never turned down funding for the program . . . because schools say they don't know how they would function without it. I want to make sure we could not be spending the money on something else and getting a better return on our investment, but principals go out of their way to single out the program to me." Weidner adds that if the budget director gets negative comments from the schools on a program, "I will highlight that to the assistant superintendent. Conversely, I highlight programs that the schools support."
- When the Chula Vista, California, Elementary School District's budget was in dire straights and the budget committee considered making cuts in the SRO program to save money, the principals expressed strong opposition to the idea, and cuts were avoided.
- Albuquerque Chief Public Safety Officer, Nicholas Bakas, reported that, when the SRO program was in jeopardy because the city was \$50 million in the hole, parents and school administrators telephoned him, the mayor, and the media to protest the planned cut—but the school administrators were the most vocal—"you can't take these guys away from us!" "
- When county commissioners in Maury County, Tennessee, tried to reduce the number of SRO positions, board of education members, school administrators, and teachers joined parents and the sheriff at the budget meetings to support continued funding of the program. The commissioners kept all the SROs.
- Jim Aquilo, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent of Schools (and a former principal for 12 years) for Plain Township School District in Stark County, said that "when the sheriff pulled out the SROs due to funding cuts, the schools went without the SRO for three weeks. The principals had a revolt because they appreciated the SRO's preventive role even more [than the feeling of security the officers created], including handling calls from parents for help. As a result, the superintendent [hired

by the Plain Township Board of Education and County Superintendent] felt the SRO's presence was vital to the school's mission and made the decision to pay for the SRO."

Even school board members who already support the program can feel the pressure.

- A school board member in one jurisdiction said that, when one particular SRO retired, "people [i.e., school administrators] were more upset at losing him than they are at losing a teacher. School administrators have told me how much they benefit from the SROs' presence [in the schools] and work with the kids."
- Robyn Marinelli, Sarasota County School Board supervisor of student services, said that, although she is one of the program's major supporters in the school district, the crucial support is from the grass roots. "Principals would be extremely upset if the program was cut—they would complain at principals' meetings and by e-mailing the superintendent and board members."

Programs can gain school administration support, however, ***only if they provide a good quality "product"—talented and dedicated SROs***. James Bailey, Maury County Mayor, said that the key to his program's success (in addition to strong leadership at the sheriff's department) is "recruitment of quality officers who are leaders and who are genuinely interested in doing a good job." This, of course, is why carefully screening and training the SROs—topics addressed in chapters 3 and 5—is so important. It also means that programs need to evaluate their effectiveness to ensure that they are meeting the schools' needs.

If the program does a good job, most school administrators and teachers gain three significant benefits from SROs ***that sometimes the program needs to remind school personnel they are gaining in order to motivate them to continue to support program funding***:

- increased safety in the schools,
- the feeling of increased safety, and
- improved response time.

### **Provide Increased Safety in the Schools**

SROs improve safety in the schools by handling violence and preventing violence.

#### *Handle Violence*

SROs take care of violent incidents in the schools by handling situations involving fights, assaults, and weapons, and by helping to develop the schools' crisis response plans.



Take care of fights, assaults, and weapons. Most school district administrators support the program because they believe it improves safety in the schools—and protecting students is part of their job.

- Four of the five school districts in Stark County, Ohio, that took on at least partial funding for their SROs after the sheriff said he could no longer pay the entire cost said they did so primarily to maintain safety in the schools and because students, parents, and teachers all feel safer with a deputy in the schools.
- When a high school principal in another jurisdiction was asked what he might tell other school administrators about the SRO program, he simply stated, "If you have the opportunity to have an SRO at your school, *'how stupid of you to say no.'* It is an awesome responsibility to be a principal and in charge of the safety of students today. We are very vulnerable."

Several school administrators specifically highlighted how ***SROs serve to keep principals and assistant principals, and even teachers, out of harm's way*** (see the box, "Administrators Appreciate That SROs Protect Them From Physical Encounters"). In particular, several assistant principals reported they had discovered that irate parents show more respect to SROs than to administrators. Some administrators call in the SRO to mediate disputes between a furious parent and an assistant principal.

- A high school assistant principal, reported that "when parents get belligerent—and they can get very nasty—I ask the SRO to sit in to 'observe,' and that usually calms them down."
- On a day when the SRO at a Sarasota County middle school was at a training, the principal called Robyn Marinelli, supervisor of student services, to report that an angry parent who had walked into the school had just gotten into a fight with girls who were holding her daughter hostage. Marinelli called Tim Carney, the captain in charge of the program, who, with a supervisor and two SROs, rushed over to the school, evacuated the front office, and locked down the building. After the SROs had issued a no-trespass order to the parent, she left peaceably.

#### Administrators Appreciate That SROs Protect Them From Physical Encounters

- Austin Garofalo, a former Salem, New Hampshire, high school assistant principal, observed that "the SRO is extremely important for me to be able to do my job because I know I have the back-up—someone who is skilled in dealing with belligerence and use of force that I am not trained to do and do not want to do."
- In Louisiana, Terrebonne Parish School Board member L.P. Bordelon confirmed that "I was a school principal and I got into some scrapes breaking up fights, and I don't like to fight, so the SROs' presence is important [to making it unnecessary for administrators to have to break up fights]."
- Cynthia Celander, a Marshall, Minnesota, high school assistant principal, says that she has the SRO sit in with her when she has to discipline a student and feels the situation may potentially escalate.

Help develop crisis response plans. Many SROs contribute to their schools' safety by developing, or participating in the preparation of, their schools' crises management plans.

- An SRO in Stark County sits on the school board's security committee and has assessed the physical safety of each building. He has helped devise crisis plans to implement during various types of emergency situations; as a result, according to a school official, the SRO had proven immensely helpful and resourceful during a meningitis scare during which he coordinated communication and contact among public health experts, parents, students, and school district personnel.
- Dan Genest, the Salem middle school SRO, reported that he learned about conducting school safety surveys at an advanced National Association of School Resource Officer (NASRO) training. Based on what he learned, over the summer he conducted a survey of every room in his school documenting safety hazards such as windows that did not lock, rooms that were not clearly marked with a number, and lack of coverings on door windows that are needed if there is a lockdown. He reported his findings to school administrators who fixed some of the deficiencies, including installing shades on all door windows. He also learned how to run a lockdown at a school. As a result, he identified deficiencies in his school's lockdown procedures—for example, the procedure did not address what to do if there were students in the gym or cafeteria. Again, he brought the information to the assistant principal, who changed the school's procedures.

### *Prevent Violence from Occurring*

School administrators, as well SROs, agree that SROs are a valuable presence because ***they routinely prevent crime and violence from happening***. This is one of the main reasons so many administrators in the study report that they support the program (see the box "School Administrators Cite the SROs' Ability to Prevent Crime and Violence as a Major Reason for Supporting the Program").

Similarly, the mere presence of police officers and deputies in the schools probably prevents some crime. L.P. Bordelon, the Terrebonne Parish School Board vice president in Louisiana, said that:

Most school board members feel we are getting our money's worth because the SROs . . . are a great deterrent. Kids do stupid things because of peer pressure, a dare, to take risks, etc. Seeing a uniformed police officer in the school deters them. So it's preventive discipline in the best sense of the word.



### Administrators Appreciate That SROs Protect Them From Physical Encounters

According to Sergeant Rochelle Thompson, supervisor of the Oklahoma County Sheriff's Office SRO program, after the COPS in Schools grant ended in January 2004 and Crooked Oak, one of five participating school districts, could not find the money to support its SRO, the department pulled the SRO out of the school.

But, in February, Shannon Goodsell, the new superintendent of schools, called me to ask to reinstate the SRO—and said he would find the money—because there were guns being brought into the schools, gangs reappearing, and an administrator had been attacked in the month since the SRO had left. According to Goodsell, when the grant ran out, we tried to do it on the cheap—without an SRO—but in three weeks all heck broke loose. So we cut each school line item budget by 1-2 percent—football and basketball, classroom supplies, technology—to come up with the \$30,000 to pay for the officer to come back. As a new administrator, he had not been aware that it was the SRO program that had "kept the lid" on the schools.

A school district administrator in another State tells a similar story:

The school district evaluated the program—administrators, counselors, and faculty discussed whether we needed it to help kids. At the high school, the SRO headed off a lot of the drinking that we had a problem with because of what he learned—for example, kids would warn him that a keg party was going to take place. We have a lot of kids involved in DWI—several have been killed—so drinking was a concern to all of us and we felt he was good in helping with that. That's what tipped the scale in favor of paying for him.

Local school administrators in Tucson tell school district officials that the mere presence of the cruiser on patrol or parked outside a middle or elementary school helps deter high school students from trespassing on school grounds and child molesters from approaching.

Most principals and assistant principals contacted for the study agree that ***SROs also prevent crime and violence by counseling and mentoring kids so that they do not get into trouble.*** According to L.P. Bordelon, "SROs do a lot of counseling that keeps kids straight."

### **Provide the Feeling of Increased Safety**

To many high ranking school administrators, almost as important as providing safety in the schools is providing *the feeling* of safety. According to one superintendent of schools, "Kids need to feel safe, and the SRO's presence makes a difference in their feeling of safety. He sends a message about creating a safe environment." Many school administrators support continued program funding in large measure or in part because SROs have this effect.

- Paul Houlihan, a former high school principal in Palm Beach County who in the past served on budget review committees, consistently objected to any cuts in the SRO budget. Houlihan explained that "because the media often focuses on lack of safety, there is a need to provide parents with a sense of safety. Students," according to Houlihan, "need to feel that they are in a safe environment, and parents need to feel that they are sending their children to a safe school. There needs to be the appearance, as well as the reality, of a safe campus environment."
- Marshall school board member Kathy Reiber reported that "We did surveys of students, and safety is one of their top concerns. So the district needs to make kids feel safe—and the program is a small price to pay to help do that."

### **Improve Response Time**

Over and over, administrators reported that they benefited tremendously by the quick response they got from their SROs in crises in comparison with how long it had taken them in the past to get an officer or deputy on scene by calling 911. The quick response relieves administrators from having to hold and pacify an often agitated, accused student for a long period of time.

- Cynthia Celander, a Marshall high school assistant principal, reported that "if I called 911 every time a violent incident occurred, I'd have to wait for a patrol officer to arrive. Instead, Jim [Marshall, the SRO] handles it immediately."
- Paul Houlihan said, "On more than one occasion in the past, it would take much too long for the sheriff's department to respond to school calls for assistance. This is not longer a problem for schools when the SROs are already there."

Several school administrators said they supported continued program funding primarily for this reason.

- When the Chula Vista budget committee considered making cuts in the SRO program to save money, the principals opposed the cutback because their major concern was preventing disruption and having an immediate capacity to deal with it when it occurred.

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- A town council member in one jurisdiction said that the town has accepted the SRO program as part of the police department's budget because the high school principal and chief of police convincingly demonstrated to council members that an officer assigned to the school full time reduces the response time for incidents.

To gain support from these administrators for continued program funding, programs must do their utmost to ***make sure that SROs are in fact—to the extent possible—immediately available to the schools***. As a result, many programs are careful not to pull their SROs out of the schools for special assignments or in-service training except when schools are not in session (see chapter 5, "Training SROs"). Otherwise, Chief James Kelly of the Palm Beach County School District Police Department, observes, "administrators say, 'they're never here anyway when we need them, so what's the big deal?' "

### **When Possible, Accommodate Schools—Go the Extra Mile**

Programs can help ensure their survival ***if SROs go out of their way to make themselves useful to school administrators and teachers***. Sometimes the extra effort is trivial—but still appreciated; at other times, it can involve a significant investment of time, effort, and even frustration—but the payoff can be strong lobbying for the program by school officials.

Sarasota County Sheriff's Office SROs, program supervisors, and even the sheriff have gone out of their way to accommodate the schools. The case study at the end of the chapter documents their efforts. The result has been tremendous support for the program among school district officials, including providing the program with free space in the school district's headquarters—a significant financial savings to an agency with an acute space shortage.

### SRO Programs Provide Other Benefits to Schools

Some school board members, school administrators, and teachers support the SRO program at least in part because of three other benefits they feel SROs provide.

#### Help Reduce Truancy

Some school districts were initially interested in having SROs in the schools because administrators needed to reduce truancy levels.

- During the process of planning and setting goals for the SRO program, school administrators from all but one of the five Stark County school districts participating in the program identified truancy as a major area of concern because their graduation and promotion rates had fallen well below the State's mandated levels. The administrators hoped that, with the consistent follow-up that the presence of an SRO would facilitate, chronic truants would grow tired of being "hassled" and begin to attend classes more regularly. Graduation rates began to improve markedly for all five districts (see the discussion under "Empirical Evidence of Effectiveness" in the text).
- Nicholas Bakas, the Albuquerque Mayor's Chief Public Safety Officer, reported that "the possibility of cutting the program is always raised at budget time. But [in addition to its other benefits] the program is also seen as having the benefit of reducing truancy, which also reduces crime."

#### Reduce Liability and Lawsuits

Some school board members and school district administrators in the study appreciate that **the program reduces their legal liability**. A superintendent of schools observed that "assistant principals are always concerned about liability—that's why the windows on their doors are never covered. We have kids who are much bigger than deans, and we have female students being dealt with by male deans. So there is concern about liability, including the use of force."

#### Save Time

Several administrators and teachers reported that **SROs save them significant time and stress**.

- Kathy Reiber, a school board member in Marshall (and a former classroom teacher), reported, "We put in more money because . . . it saves staff—faculty and administrators—considerable time. They have told me that, when there is an incident, because the SRO is there and knows the requirements and procedures for an investigation, it takes the weight off their shoulders."
- A Maury County commissioner reported that "Having officers to worry about safety and discipline reduces the burden on teachers and allows them to spend more time teaching."

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Other programs, too, go out of their way to be helpful to school administrators and teachers.

- One SRO registers student and faculty cars so that, if there is a problem with a vehicle, administrators can go to him to find out whose car it is. When an assistant principal saw a shotgun in a car in the school parking lot, he asked the SRO to investigate. Using his registry, the SRO was able to learn in a matter of minutes that the student and his father had gone hunting and had forgotten to remove the gun.
- Some SROs perform background checks for administrators on faculty and other school employees—for example, when a staff member is suspected of stealing. The police or sheriff's department either will not provide the service or cannot do so as quickly as the school district wants.
- The Palm Beach County program has trained 6,000 school staff in de-escalation and physical restraint techniques for which the faculty express considerable gratitude (see the box "Teaching School Personnel 'Verbal Judo' and Restraint Techniques").

### Teaching School Personnel 'Verbal Judo' and Restraint Techniques

In 1992, Palm Beach County School District SROs saw that administrators were asking them to arrest students who got into trouble because of the principals' and assistant principals' poor verbal skills. As a result, James Kelly, the school district police department chief, arranged to train all school administrators in verbal skills and de-escalation strategies. Later, in 1994, he expanded the training to include physical restraint techniques adapted for educators working with children (that is, not through pain compliance), so they could avoid physical confrontations and serve as back-up to the SROs.

Eventually, Kelly incorporated the training as part of a four-day course for selected school personnel who are members of each school's crisis team. The department's own training unit offers the training. As of late 2004, the unit had trained 6,000 school staff in the techniques along with explanations of State statutes and school policy on the use of physical force. Teachers receive continuing education credits for attending the course.

According to Kathleen Weigel, a high school principal, "The department has trained my whole faculty in verbal judo, and 30 of my faculty are trained to do take-downs through team training. And Jim [Kelly] recertifies us every year. We don't have issues with fights because the staff and SROs are trained in verbal judo to de-escalate situations—with 2,200 students, we have about only one fight a month."

As the selected course evaluations below suggest, teachers report that the training has enabled them to feel more confident in front of students and has resulted in students responding positively to the teachers' "command presence."

*Have you utilized any of the verbal/non-hands on techniques to de-escalate potentially aggressive students?*

- A student was angry because I asked him to open his book. I sensed he was very angry, and I practiced active listening. I told him I saw he was angry, and he left the room.
- Yes, every day. I have several EH [emotionally handicapped] students in my classroom. On one occasion, a student became frustrated and threw his paper on the floor and tipped over a chair. I used a soft but firm voice and calmed him down. My training helped de-escalate the situation.

*Have you utilized any of the self-defense procedures or control procedures?*

- There was a time when 2 students were fighting in a classroom, and I used a block procedure to prevent being hit in the stomach.
- I have used the Finger Peel Technique to remove hands from hair pulling.
- I helped another trained teacher take a fifth grade uncooperative student to the office. We used the elbow hold.



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## How to Motivate Public Officials

Typically, local elected and appointed officials, including town and city council members, mayors, and town managers, as well as school committee or school board members, decide on the funding for the local law enforcement agency and school system. As such, they are in the best position to make sure the program continues—or to drop it.

When public officials support an SRO program, it is generally because:

- they want to ensure that students are safe in their schools;
- they risk the public's ire if they fail to support the program; or
- school administrators have lobbied for its retention.

### Stress the Program's Contribution to Safety in the Schools

Public officials with responsibility for schools are concerned about ensuring safety for students and faculty. This concern can take two forms:

- recognition that they are responsible for keeping kids safe—it is part of their job—and
- wanting to avoid being blamed if a tragedy occurs.

Many public officials contacted for the study support continued funding for their SRO programs because, as West Orange, New Jersey, councilman John Skarbnik said, "They give additional security for the schools." According to Albuquerque's Chief Public Safety Officer Nicholas Bakas, he and the mayor decided to continue to fund the SRO program after the COPS in Schools grants ran out. "In light of the need to provide homeland security, it's the mayor's responsibility to be in a position to protect the 100,000 students in the city and have a liaison in the schools."

According to program participants in many jurisdictions, some school committee members also continue to fund the program because, as one program supervisor said, "the school board supports the program in part because, if there were a tragedy at a school, it would become a political disaster if it had cut or killed the program." Kathy Reiber, school board member in Marshall, acknowledged that "I would be concerned about cutting the program and then a critical incident occurs and constituents say, 'Why did you cut the SRO?' "

### Generate or Channel Public Support for the Program

These same public officials are, of course, responsive to their constituents, especially parents. In several communities, ***the potential for objections by angry parents if the officials cut back the SRO program appears to help motivate***

**them to continue to provide funding.** For example, one principal said, "Parents would object if we lost our cops—I could make two calls [to influential members of the community] and have 100 parents vocally irate after telling the two [community members] whom else to call [to generate a protest]." The threat—and effectiveness—of complaints from parents is not just theoretical.

- Because the Tucson city council can vote on individual line items in the city's budget, it could drop the SRO program. However, a member of the city council said that "constituents call me if an SRO is going to get moved—one had surgery and, when a high school liaison officer filled in for him, the world fell apart—the principal called, residents called—the PTA organized it. They were concerned that the SRO's leaving [was not temporary but] would be a long-term loss."
- Albuquerque Chief Public Safety Officer Nicholas Bakas reported that when he and the new mayor came into office in 2001, "the city was \$50 million in the hole. So the SRO program was on the chopping block. But . . . parents and school administrators telephoned me, the mayor, and the media to protest the planned cut. So we kept the program—but the mayor also recognized that school safety was his responsibility."
- Maury County Mayor James Bailey said that in 2003, when the county commission tried to reduce the number of SRO positions in the elementary schools, the county "rose up in arms." School administrators, teachers—and parents—attended the budget meetings to support continued funding.

Officials, of course, can also be influenced by constituent praise for programs. West Orange councilman John Skarbnik reported, "I've heard positive things about the SROs from parents—the issue comes up when there are problems [in the schools] and the SROs are there [to handle them]." As described in the box "Generating Public Support for the Program," **programs can take the initiative to help ensure that positive assessments of the program reach the ears of public officials.**

### Generating Public Support for the Program

Many programs do not leave it to chance to get the word to officials that their SROs are doing important work in the schools.

- Elementary school principal Christopher Renouf in Sarasota County said, "Safe and orderly schools is a hot topic with parents. Last night at a monthly parent advisory council meeting, members raised the issue. ***The SRO volunteered to stay and attend the meeting on his own time.***" [emphasis added]
- The Maury County program believes that its efforts to generate public support paid off when ***a coalition consisting of parents, school administrators, and the sheriff convinced the county commissioners not to reduce the number of SROs.*** The program's activities designed to create community support include:
  - attending every community event—according to Captain Nathan Johns, it helps when a community member can say, "You work in my son's school, and now you are directing traffic during the county fair!"
  - marketing the program through news media and presentations to clubs;
  - inviting parents to schools for extracurricular activities, because the SROs are present and parents can see the interactions between the deputies and their children and can ask the SROs questions; and
  - providing monthly activity reports to the county commission—one commissioner reported that all the commissioners appreciate the sheriff's concerted efforts to keep them informed of program activities.
- The Fontana program actively seeks recognition for its program and then publicizes the approval and awards it receives to those who hold its purse strings.
  - With funding from Microsoft, the program developed and implemented a high school program called DRY2K designed to reduce underage drinking and driving. Based on part on the program's success, the department then applied for and received awards from the California League of Cities and the International Association of Chiefs of Police. The department ***highlighted the awards in meetings with the city council, school board, and community organizations.***
  - The program received a Model School Resource Officer Agency Award from the National Association of School Resource Officers. The program arranged for a local trophy company to produce replicas of the award plaque and ***gave copies to every city council member and school district administrator.***

## What Motivates Everybody

There are two strategies that can motivate every type of funding source to continue to provide money for an SRO program:

- (1) scientific evidence (especially when provided by independent evaluators) that the program is achieving its goals (or at least those goals that the people who hold the purse strings care about); and
- (2) documentation that SROs are productive and doing what they are supposed to be doing.

## Develop Empirical Evidence of Program Effectiveness<sup>3</sup>

Administrators of any program are often understandably reluctant to evaluate their efforts because they lack time or expertise, or have concerns about violating confidentiality. Most of all, they may be apprehensive that the evaluation results will not show that they are doing a good job. However, SRO programs **may need the results of an evaluation to provide compelling evidence to funding sources of the need to continue the program**. Program staff may also need the results to convince **their own agency heads** to continue to provide or request funding for the program.

Program supervisors contacted for the study usually evaluate their programs in two ways:

- (1) look at statistical data to see if the program has been responsible for any improvements; and
- (2) conduct surveys to find out if program "consumers" are using and benefiting from the program.

### Examine Statistical Data

As shown in the box "Sample Statistical Data Program Supervisors Can Consider Examining to Evaluate the Program," program supervisors can study a range of data to document program effectiveness. In general, supervisors should examine data that will show the program is achieving what school administrators, school board members, local town officials, as well as the police chief or sheriff, want the program to be doing. Of course, the data need to be available or easily generated, and programs need to have access to them.

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<sup>3</sup> Program evaluation is also essential to find out whether the program needs improvement and, if so, what specific changes are needed. Chapter 6, "Supervising SROs," addresses this component of program evaluation. Of course, many program evaluations address both goals—assess effectiveness and identify the need for improvement.

### Sample Statistical Data Supervisors Can Consider Examining to Evaluate the Program

Number of students SRO advised  
 Number of students SRO taught  
 Police calls for service  
 Arrests and citations  
 Weapons and drugs seized  
 Number and types of safety or disorder problems solved  
 Crime incidents in school by type of incident (e.g., fights, bullying)  
 Crime incidents in vicinity of school  
 Noncriminal disorder incidents in school  
 Noncriminal disorder incidents in vicinity of school  
 Victimization in school and in vicinity of school  
 Truancy rates  
 Suspensions (in-school and out-of-school) and expulsions  
 Student tardiness  
 Student levels of fear  
 Student satisfaction with the SRO

The discussion below gives examples of how programs have used specific data to assess whether their goals were being achieved.

Crime rates. Perhaps the most common statistic that school boards and community members contacted for the study want to see decline is the crime rate in schools.

- In Terrebonne Parish, the most important original purpose for establishing the SRO program was to reduce the number of fights in the schools. Data suggest that this goal was achieved at South Terrebonne High School at least in part because of the SRO program. The number of suspensions for fighting at the school declined from 72 to 48 and then to 32 for two school years starting with the year the program began and then in the following school years remained relatively constant at about one-third the original rate (24 to 29 suspensions per year).
- From the 1991-92 school year to the 1994-95 school year (the year the SRO program began), the number of reported incidents at a junior high school in another jurisdiction increased from 8 to 19, and 19 to 78. The number remained relatively constant for the next three school years and then declined significantly during the 1998-1999 school year to 34 incidents, with a further drop to 22 incidents during the 2000-2001 school year (see appendix A). The increase during the SRO's initial years may be attributable to the officer's recording incidents that previously were not reported to the police department; the decline beginning with the 1998-1999 school year may reflect a decrease in student misconduct due to the SRO's consistent presence and intervention.

- The Delaware Department of Education commissioned an evaluation of the State Police SRO program in 1998 that compared the number of incidents, number of students involved in incidents, and number of incidents resulting in police charges in schools with and without SROs in 1994-95 (before any SROs had been placed in the schools) and in 1997-98. The evaluation found that schools that never had an SRO had a statistically significant increase in the number of police charges in 1997-98 compared with 1994-95, while there was no significant increase in schools with SROs. Despite limitations of the evaluation, ***the Department of Education was able to use the results to support continued and expanded funding of the program by both the legislature and school districts.*** The department has also used the results to obtain funding from other sources.

Truancy rates. During the process of planning and setting goals for the SRO program, school administrators from all but one of the Stark County Sheriff's Office partner school districts hoped that the SROs would reduce truancy because the schools' graduation and promotion rates had fallen well below State-mandated levels. The SROs counseled truant students, met with their parents or guardians, and, in some cases, conducted home visits. Graduation rates generally increased for the three-and-one-half year period since the program began compared with the four-year period before it began. Of course, to suggest that the work of a single officer serving numerous schools would, in and of itself, improve attendance, would be to oversimplify the explanation. Nonetheless, the figures do show the positive results of the districts' sustained campaigns to tackle truancy, efforts in which the SRO program has played an integral role. As a result, ***the Plain Township School District in Stark County presented the data to the town's chief administrative officer and to the three elected trustees who appoint him.***

Discipline rates. Many programs expect SROs to reduce discipline rates. Data collected over two years from Stark County showed that, as the officers became more fully integrated in their high schools, there was a decrease in the number of disciplinary actions per 100 students (in-school suspensions, Saturday schools, out-of-school suspensions, expulsions). A similar decline occurred in some of the middle schools. By and large, other data showed that the school districts imposed fewer of the strictest punishments (out-of-school suspension or expulsion) in the 2001-02 school year than they did in 2000-01. Principals suggested two explanations for the improvement:

- With a fuller integration of the SRO program, administrators were able to intervene in cases before they developed into more serious infractions.
- The SROs' presence may have helped to de-escalate student misbehavior by calming tensions already in progress.



Fairless High School in Stark County tracks changes in a number of measures of school safety and performance to assess the effectiveness of its Community Care Team—of which the school's SRO is an integral part—that seeks to overcome barriers that prevent at-risk students from obtaining an education. The data from 1991 to 2002 (the program began in 1996) showed a significant improvement in discipline rates as well as in a number of other areas (see below). As a result of this evidence of the team's effectiveness, when the Stark County Sheriff, facing massive layoffs due to a budget cut, asked the school district to increase its share of the SRO's cost, the school board contributed an additional \$16,000 from its general fund to continue to maintain the SRO on the team. Richard Hull, the high school principal at the time who set up the Care Team, was able to make a convincing case for the funding in part because he had data showing that the team was contributing to significant improvements in student proficiency and school safety.

<b>Selected Measures of Effectiveness of the Fairless High School Before and After Community Care Team Became Operational</b>		
<b>Measure</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>2002</b>
graduation rate	66%	91%
reading proficiency	74%	95%
writing proficiency	66%	96%
math proficiency	39%	84%
delinquency rate	60 students	2 students
severe discipline rate	111 students	27 students

Free up patrol officers. The Stark County sheriff was interested in knowing whether placing a deputy in the five school districts had freed road deputies to perform other vital patrol functions in the county. Data showed that the number of incidents that deputies other than SROs responded to at schools within its partnering districts decreased dramatically from 197, or 75 percent of incidents in 1999, to 93, or just 25 percent of incidents in 2001. Without the SRO program in place, even if one expected a level number of incidents at the schools, sheriff's office deputies would have had to leave their other patrol areas to respond to approximately 100 more incidents at schools. If the number of incidents that required a response rose to the level actually reported in 2001, then deputies would have had to spend even more time away from their other patrol duties, responding to approximately 280 calls (75 percent of 373).

### *Conduct Surveys*

Several program supervisors have surveyed students, teachers, school administrators, and parents to find out if they have used and benefited from the program—and then used the findings to help convince funding sources to continue

to fund the program. Many school districts routinely conduct "school climate" or "school quality" surveys of parents, students, or school personnel that include questions about school safety. In Oklahoma County, in conjunction with the Plain View School District's overall safety planning process, the school superintendent's office developed and distributed a survey to teachers and students in the spring of 2002 that specifically addressed the SRO program's performance. The survey provided two important findings:

- More staff and students from all three grades in the middle school reported that they would feel more comfortable discussing an unsafe situation with the SRO than with reporting it to a principal or teacher.
- Of the various safety measures in place at their schools, staff and students most often rated the SRO as the most effective.

Furthermore, when asked their opinion of their building's SRO, students checked off positive descriptions much more frequently than negative ones:

- The top five responses were "Cares About Kids," "Fair," "Likes His/Her Job," "Good Role Model," and "Problem Solver." No more than eight percent of the students said they perceived their SRO as "Unavailable," "Useless," or someone who "Doesn't Like or Trust Kids."
- Half the participants from both county school districts reported that their opinion of police had improved since the SROs' arrival, with only one percent reporting that their opinion of the police had gotten worse.

The Palm Beach County School District conducts an anonymous annual survey among its principals in which school administrators assess 40 different school district departments in six different areas on a scale of 1-5, with 5 the highest rating. School district departments range from the school board, to information technology, to the assistant superintendent for curriculum and learning, to employee benefits and risk management. The department's ratings address six areas: cooperation, image, planning, communication, management, and overall performance.

In 2003, among 125 of the district's 160 principals who responded to the survey, "School Police," with a rating of 4.38, had the eighth highest score among 40 school district functions rated (see appendix B). While the police department is responsible for other important activities in addition to the SRO program, it is likely that most principals rate the department based primarily on their experience with the SROs in their schools. The school district also tracks changes in these ratings over time: the police department's rating has increased steadily in the past several years from 3.64 in 1996 to 4.38 in 2003—an improvement of 20 percent.

### Focus Groups can Provide Useful Evidence of Program Effectiveness

Focus groups make it possible to explore in depth student feelings and perceptions about a program. When in 1996 the Schaumburg program first expanded beyond a pilot school to three schools, the school board wanted empirical evidence that the program was working. As a result, school administrators hired a researcher from a local university at the end of the program's second year to conduct focus groups with students. The focus groups showed that, between the spring of 1996 and the spring of 1997, student perceptions of safety were unchanged. However, as the researcher noted, "Lack of a particularly strong impact by the school resource officers during the first year should not be surprising . . . one cannot expect a single staff member to counter in just one year the effects of normal developmental changes and the intensity of peer pressures." In short, while programs need to evaluate the SROs' work as early as the first year of operation to identify any problems with the program, the results in terms of outcomes should be treated with caution until after the program has been in operation for at least two years.

As described in detail in the case study at the end of the chapter, until 2003 school guidance counselors in Schaumburg also conducted annual focus groups at each grade level at each of the five junior high schools with an SRO. The groups included random samples of 10 seventh graders and 10 eighth graders, as well as a group of about 10 combined seventh and eighth graders who had dealt with the SRO personally.

### Document SRO Activity

Individuals in a position to sustain the program, or who can recommend that others continue to fund it, are often unaware of how active SROs are and what they do. For example, in Sarasota County community groups had been asking to be allowed to bring their own education programs into the schools—which would have supplanted some SRO activities. As a result, during an annual presentation of the budget to the school committee, members asked what the SROs were teaching at each grade level. After the SROs briefed the members on the officers' wide-ranging activities from prom night to teaching about Internet safety, the committee decided to protect the program against attempts by community groups trying to take over some of SRO program's activities in the schools.

As discussed in chapter 6, "Supervising SROs," most programs require SROs to submit logs of their activities. While these logs are an important means of monitoring SRO activity, ***programs can also use them to document that their SROs are busy—and busy doing the right things.*** For example, Wade McKittrick, the Marshall high school principal, reported that "Jim [Marshall, the SRO] does a great job keeping data on his hours, which kids he's talked with, and presentations he's given. This is a very data-driven school district—we evaluate the value of things and make budget reductions based on that. Jim's data help sustain the program."

In Sioux Falls, South Dakota, the main reason the police department's community services division adopted a free incident tracking software program called *School COP* (see the box "*School COP* Enables SROs . . .") was to document conclusively how busy and productive the 10 SROs were as a means of avoiding the possibility of other divisions in the police department, such as patrol, traffic, or detectives, "raiding" the SROs to increase their own personnel. Although the community services division is acting proactively in case other divisions should try to "steal" its officers, there is historical precedent in the department for being concerned. After the 9/11 tragedy, the agency lost nearly 10 percent of its sworn officers to the military. In response, the department divisions that lost officers sought to make up for their reductions in personnel by asking the chief to transfer officers from elsewhere in the department to their divisions. As a result, the chief did disband the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) program and transferred its officers to the depleted divisions—but he left the SRO program unscathed.

#### **School COP Enables SROs to Document Their Activities Effortlessly**

*School COP* is a free software package for entering, tracking, tabulating, and analyzing incidents that occur on school campuses. Since 2001, *School COP* has been downloaded over 5,500 times from its website (see below). It has also been distributed to over 7,000 police officers, sheriff's deputies, and school administrators at over 40 COPS in Schools conferences sponsored by the COPS Office.

SROs say that *School COP* saves them time by making it easy to produce reports for supervisors, school administrators, and school boards. The software also helps SROs preserve their positions. As one SRO put it, "I document everything I've been doing—meetings, counseling activities, etc. This helps me create my own job security . . . and helps sell the program."

- In one community, the police chief presented *School COP* graphs and summary reports to the school board. The SRO supervisor reports that "now they [city officials] are asking, 'Where are we going to find the funds to keep the SRO program going,' rather than wondering, 'Do we really want to continue this program?'"
- An SRO program supervisor in a sheriff's office with over 20 SROs serving several school districts reports that the software "has been a tremendous asset to us. I currently enter all data from incident reports generated by the SROs as well as any done by patrol officers after school hours. I generate annual reports by district and individual school for the superintendents of each district for justification purposes to continue the SRO program within their districts."

*School COP* and an instructional manual may be found at: [www.schoolcopsoftware.com](http://www.schoolcopsoftware.com) and downloaded for free. Included with the materials is a sample database that novice users can test out with impunity—that is, without losing any of their own data.

The Palm Beach County School District Police Department keeps a chart that compares the number of times SROs conducted each of 11 activities each school year. Activities include student counseling, parent conferences, and arrests. The chart indicates that, while the student population increased by 7,372 students from 2001 to 2002, the number of arrests decreased by 9 percent; similarly, while the number of students increased 5,083 from 2002 to 2003, the number of arrests again declined by 9 percent.

### **Personal Experience With the Program Can Also Generate Support**

Personal experience with the program can sometimes supplement empirical evidence of effectiveness—or substitute for it. According to Major Skip Rossi, the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office budget director (and a former SRO), "When I teach at FASRO [the Florida Association of School Resource Officers], I tell SROs in new programs, 'First and foremost, the program is built on relationships.' " Indeed, because Sarasota County central office staff and SRO program staff share office space in the same building, SRO supervisors and school district staff stop to talk informally when they run into each other on the sidewalks or in the corridors.

In several other jurisdictions, individuals in a position to help continue program funding have had first-hand experience with the SRO program that has contributed to or sealed their willingness to support it.

- As an elementary school teacher from 1971-1975, Tucson's assistant superintendent of schools had worked closely with the SRO in his school and never forgot the officer's help in finding lost children and addressing neighborhood squabbles that spilled over into the school.
- A school board member in another jurisdiction said that her best friend's son was in trouble, but the SRO had helped him to go straight—the boy has graduated from college. She personally observed her son, who has Downs Syndrome, socializing comfortably with the SRO, who took an interest in the boy.
- Kathy Reiber, Marshall school board member (and former classroom teacher), recounted that "I sat in on a D.A.R.E. class that my daughter was in and I saw Jim [Marshall, the SRO] work with kids and saw the rapport he has with them."
- Councilman John Skarbnik in West Orange observed, "I have kids in the schools, and I've asked them about the SROs. They're very well selected and coach teams. My kids have become friendly with them—the SROs are almost like a teacher."

Program staff can sometimes set up these personal experiences: Detective Kevin Nolan, the original SRO in Salem, used to invited school board members to shadow him; several took him up on the offer and saw first hand how productive and well liked Nolan was.

The four case studies that follow illustrate some of the same approaches programs used to maintain program funding discussed above, but each program also used distinctive strategies that may be worthy of replication.

- The Marshall, Minnesota, Police Department illustrates how a law enforcement agency with only 21 sworn officers and a single SRO in a very small community can maintain funding for its program despite a fiscal crisis if the agency works hard and creatively to build support, including making use of a citizens' academy attended by school officials.
- The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office program has endured for over a quarter of a century through a combination of approaches, including providing a service that principals and assistant principals tell the school district budget director is absolutely essential; benefiting financially from free office space (and close interpersonal contact) in the headquarters building owned and occupied by the school district; and accommodating reasonable requests from the schools for services that are technically outside the scope of its contract.
- Empirical evidence of the Schaumburg program's effectiveness, including periodic focus groups with students, that indicated the program was working, along with widespread support for the program among voting parents, helped convince the town to increase its financial contribution to the program when the school district could no longer pay most of the cost.
- When budget cutbacks forced the Stark County Sheriff's Office to reassign its five SROs to patrol, four of the five school districts found the money to have the officers returned to the schools. In one district, a "revolt" by the principals at losing their SROs, coupled with statistics showing that student expulsions had declined and graduation rates had increased, helped convince the school district and elected town trustees to find the money.



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## **Case Study: Marshall, Minnesota, Police Department** (21 sworn officers)

By providing a service school officials value highly, and by creatively promoting the program, the Marshall Police Department kept its SRO program afloat when it had to ask the school district to increase its share of the costs.

### **The Chief Builds Support Through a Citizens Academy**

Robert Yant, the Marshall police chief, in part because he anticipated the need for support for the SRO program from the school district after he had submitted a grant application to the COPS Office, instituted a citizens' academy and encouraged school administrators to attend. The chief felt that administrators who were more familiar with the nature of police work, with the operations of his department, and with key members of the department would provide increased support for the program that would not only make the SRO's job easier but also improve the chances of the school district's maintaining, and even increasing, its financial contribution to the program after the COPS in Schools grant ran out. Initially, the grant covered half of the officer's wages and benefits for three years, with the city contributing 35 percent of the cost and the school district 15 percent.

***Yant went out of his way to invite school administrators to participate in the academy.*** Eventually, the high school principal and assistant principal, one of the two elementary school principals, two-thirds of the school board members, and some city council members attended. Their participation represented a significant commitment—27 hours spread over one evening and a Saturday every other week, culminating in a ride-along with the officer who became the SRO.

Later, as Chief Yant had hoped, the administrators suggested to other administrators, teachers, and secretaries in their schools that they attend a future academy. As a result, at the recommendation of Cynthia Celandier, the high school assistant principal who attended the first academy, the high school principal, Wade McKittrick, attended the second academy after the SRO program had begun. While he says that having worked in a Minneapolis suburb previously that had an SRO had already made him a believer in the program, "I needed to understand how the Marshall Police Department understands and addresses issues—it was essential for me to know the intricacies of the department. Every police department looks at things differently." He also met people in the department—for example, the dispatchers and the chief—so he could later call them and be immediately recognized. "Relationship building," he says, "is an important consideration in a school-police collaboration."

Chief Yant continued to build support for the SRO program in other ways. For example, he arranged for one of his detectives to give a presentation to the school board on gang- and drug-related activity in the town and on campus to make sure

that the administrators would accept the SRO's prevention and enforcement activities in the schools related to gang activity such as graffiti, signals, clothing, and tattoos. More generally, the presentation was designed to help the board realize the need for an officer in the schools.

### **Funding Cutbacks Force a Change in the Funding Ratio**

According to Marshall senior high school principal Wade McKittrick, at the same time that the COPS in Schools grant was going to expire in 2002, at a bimonthly school administrators meeting with the superintendent, attended also in this instance by the school district financial officer, it was clear that the district had to make cuts. "Knowing that the grant was running out, the question was raised, 'Do we want to contribute more [than the 15 percent they were already contributing] for this program?' The answer was 'Yes.' "

Cynthia Celander, assistant principal at Marshall high school, remembers that "***The superintendent of schools, financial director, and business manager had heard enough positive comments about the program to fund it.***" However, providing funding for the SRO program meant reducing money in other places even more than the school district had already planned. While the school district was able to avoid cutting personnel in 2002-03, it did increase fees for some extracurricular activities and reduced expenditures for capital budgets and supplies. According to Celander, "This year [2003-04], we had to cut teachers, in part because enrollment is down. But cutting the SRO was not discussed: the business manager just shook his head and said, 'I'll figure something out.' "

### **Why the School District Was Willing to Increase its Contribution**

The school district decided to increase its contribution to the program for four reasons.

#### *Concern to Enhance School Safety*

Several school district administrators made clear that they felt that Jim Marshall's presence in the schools made it less likely that there would be a safety problem and that, if a problem occurred, it would be dealt with much more swiftly than if administrators had to call 911.

#### *Helping Students to Feel Safe*

School administrators believe that the SRO contributed significantly to helping students to feel safe.

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- According to Kathy Reiber, a school board member, "We did surveys of students, and safety is one of their top concerns. So the district needs to make kids feel safe—and the program is a small price to pay to help do that."
  - Another school official said, "Kids need to feel safe, and the SRO's presence makes a difference in their feeling of safety. He sends a message about creating a safe environment."

### *Concern about Liability*

According to one school district official, in addition to concerns about protecting students, "A factor at the back of people's minds is that, if the SRO was removed and a critical incident occurred, parents would blame the school district for dropping the program. The program is good PR for the school district because it shows that we are concerned about the kids' safety and we are spending money to do something about it. Some school killings elsewhere in Minnesota last year created concern about school safety. We'd be hard pressed after those killings to take away the SRO."

### *Benefits to School Administrators*

***Most administrators feel it is not the program that helps them, it is this particular SRO, Jim Marshall, who helps them.***

- The SRO eases the burden on school administrators by helping to handle certain problem situations or taking care of them entirely. For example, Wade McKittrick says, "If a teacher can't get a student who is disruptive to leave class, Jim can do this."
- Another school administrator reported, "There's no question he makes my job easier. For example, he can take a kid I'm so frustrated with and he puts a different spin on things and calms the kid down. He also reduced recidivism with some kids."
- According to Kathy Reiber, "We put in more money because the program was working. It saves staff—faculty and administrators—considerable time."

### Case Study: Sarasota County, Florida, Sheriff's Office (500 sworn)

The Sarasota County SRO program, administered by the sheriff's office and funded almost equally by the sheriff and the school district, has survived—and expanded—for over a quarter of a century. The program appears to have sustained itself not because of any single component but through a combination of features.

#### The Program Provides Substantial Benefits to the Sheriff's Office

The sheriff's office considers the program a showcase, a particularly bright spot in the department that gets national attention. In addition, according to Major Skip Rossi, a former SRO and currently the department's budget director, ***"If we dropped the SRO program, we'd be sending road deputies to the campuses all day because the principals are now conditioned to have immediate help."***

The school district provides the sheriff with in-kind services. The superintendent of schools and sheriff decided together to house the SRO program in the building owned by the school district and used for its headquarters. Because space is tight in the sheriff's office building, the department would have had to rent space and furniture to house the program. However, the school district donated space to the program for free, including a large reception area and two offices.

#### The Schools Realize Important Benefits From the Program

Because the SROs are well versed in how to deal with kids and because of the officers' knowledge of safety issues, the chance of a tragedy occurring in the schools is reduced. For the same reason, the school district's liability is reduced. The program also eases the burden on school administrators, who are concerned about liability, too: "What do I do if a kid has a gun?" one of them wondered. "They prefer to have an SRO available to handle the problem." Some principals have stated that they would prefer to give up a teacher rather than lose their SRO.

Because the program is housed in the building owned by the school district and used for its headquarters, ***the school district has immediate access to program staff***—something it has made use of during crises or just for in-person meetings instead of phone calls. When a teacher was arrested, the superintendent was able to meet immediately with the SRO administrator to discuss the matter. Furthermore, by their mere accessibility, SRO supervisors can provide security for school district employees in the building. Robyn Marinelli, supervisor of student services, recounted that "when the school district received word late one night that an employee might become extremely upset and act out, the executive director asked me to have an SRO in the lobby at 7:30 a.m. and remain all day. I called [Tim] Carney [the captain in charge of the program], who posted one there." The year before, the program stationed an SRO outside the superintendent's office when it appeared that an angry school district employee might try to hurt him.

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## The Program Accommodates Reasonable Requests From the Schools

The program frequently honors school district requests for assistance even though it is not strictly speaking required to do so by the contract.

- A school principal called Robyn Marinelli about an irate parent who had come to the school swearing and unwilling to budge because her daughter had been struck by another student. Because the school's regular SRO was at a training at the time, school officials had called road deputies—who locked the parent in the office. As a result, Marinelli called Sergeant Tim Enos, one of the three supervisors, who immediately dropped what he was doing and raced to the school, where he defused the situation.
- When Marinelli has called Enos to report rumors suggesting there might be gang activity at a particular school at the end of the day, the sergeant has sent four or five SROs to help keep the peace. Marinelli has asked Enos, "Can you go direct traffic at the beginning-of-the-school-year teachers' meeting?" The program does not have to do this, but he agrees.
- A principal asked for extra details for his graduation to handle the 500 cars that would be showing up at the school. Captain Carney arranged for a couple of substitute SROs who are not assigned to specific campuses to help park the cars and showed up himself to help out.
- SROs provide security at school board meetings. On one occasion, an SRO had to arrest an irate parent who refused to leave the podium; the officer then shut down the building.
- The sheriff's office had been removing the SROs from the schools during the summer to do beach patrol. As a result, at a principals' meeting several years ago it was agreed that, because there were summer schools going on, the SROs were needed on campus. The group assigned a principal to take up the concern with the sheriff, who arranged to have an SRO in the summer schools or on call at all times.

***The sheriff has personally been helpful to the school district.*** In 2002, the county held a referendum to increase the millage on the property tax to provide an additional \$33 million for each of the following four years to increase funds for the schools. To support the Sarasota County School District's efforts, during the campaign the sheriff told community groups and the press about the importance of approving the referendum. He never mentioned the SRO program, which stood to benefit only slightly from the additional monies (the schools would use a very modest amount to pay for SRO overtime), instead campaigning primarily in an effort to provide support to the schools.

The result of this willingness to accommodate administrators—within reason—increases support for the program throughout the entire school district community because word of how pleased principals, teachers, and school district administrators are with the program travels to the people in charge of allocating the money. As a result, the budget managers in the school district who decide whether they will continue to contribute money to maintaining the program consistently approve each year's new contract. According to Al Weidner, the school district's budget director:

Even in hard times in the 1990s when the system lost State funding, we increased the program's funding because schools say they don't know how they would function without it. The feedback I get from principals is that the SROs are visible and teach. The principals go out of their way to single out the program to me. I want to make sure we could not be spending the money on something else and getting a better return on our investment, but none of the administrators ever suggested cutting the SRO program. ***I recommend to the assistant superintendent what to spend the district's money on and, if I get negative comments from the schools on a program, I will highlight that to the assistant superintendent. Conversely, I highlight programs that the schools support.*** [emphasis added]

### **Neither Partner Feels the Other Is Not Paying Its Fair Share**

The school district has paid about half of the program's costs from when the initiative first began in 1980, and this has never changed. With only two significant exceptions, the sheriff's office and the school district have split the program costs (\$2.34 million in 2004): first, the sheriff's office currently pays the \$66,000 for the office manager; second, while during the program's first year the two agencies split the cost of one SRO's cruiser, the sheriff's office has paid for the officers' cruisers ever since.

When the sheriff's office requested funding for two additional SROs for the 2004-05 budget, the school board agreed to pay half the cost and the county commissioners approved the expenditure. The department and school board also agreed to split the \$3,015 cost of maintaining a dog in the program. The school district agreed to contribute \$10,000 for SRO training expenses for registration fees, per diem, and, when out of state, travel expenses. According to Al Weidner:

When Robyn [Marinelli] and [Tim] Carney negotiated for the 2004-2005 contract, Robyn came to me to ask for the \$10,000 for training the SROs. I had no problem approving the funds because the program is very important and we had the money—the schools like the program and want to expand it.



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## **Personal Experience With the Program and Program Staff Helps Ensure Everyone Supports the Program**

There are very senior administrators in the sheriff's office who, as former SROs, have a first-hand appreciation for the program. The current sheriff—one of the founders of NASRO—was the program's second SRO, and the department's current budget director was the third SRO. Three captains are former SROs.

The program has resulted in a close professional and even personal relationship between a number of sheriff's and school district personnel. Major Rossi goes fishing with one school principal who is a long-time program supporter. Because they are housed in the same building, SRO supervisors and school district staff talk informally all the time, sharing concerns and gossip, squeezing arms, and ribbing each other. "This [close proximity] is a big advantage," Sergeant Tim Enos said. "Now, we can connect a face with the name if we have to communicate by telephone." But, more typically, people pop into each other's offices or call to ask, "Can I come down to talk?"

### **Case Study: Schaumburg, Illinois, School District 54** (140 sworn)

Until 2004, School District 54 paid for three-quarters of the five SROs' salaries and, because of the perceived quality of the program that was in part based on empirical evidence and in part due to the program's perceived benefits to administrators and students, for eight years there was never a question about cutting it back. Examples of empirical evidence included declines in tobacco use and the continued failure of gangs to gain a foothold in the schools.

- *Possession of cigarettes and smoking declined dramatically.* Detective John Jameson, the program's first SRO, along with Ward Nelson, then an assistant principal, rediscovered an existing town ordinance that empowers officers to fine students \$75 for possession of cigarettes. Using the ordinance, the SRO ticketed some students, whose parents had to pay the fine. In addition, in the first few cases the students and their parents had to go to court. The other SROs began using the ordinance, as well. As a result, within two years, cigarette possession and smoking ended in and around the middle schools. According to one principal, "The school used to have to suspend several kids for having cigarettes on them; that has stopped." Without the SROs issuing the citations, it would have been too cumbersome for school administrators to have repeatedly called 911 to have a patrol officer come over to issue them.
- *Gang activity remained out of the schools.* Both the school district's SRO coordinator and the police department's SRO supervisor believe that local police departments had already done a good job of making it difficult for gangs to establish a foothold in the community. However, they believe that the SRO program continued to keep them out of the schools. Among the reasons students in focus groups (see

below) gave for the absence of gang activity were the Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) program taught by the SROs and the presence of SROs in the buildings.

### **Focus Groups Showed the Program Was Working—but Could Be Improved**

Until 2003, ***the school district conducted annual focus groups at each grade level at each of the five junior high schools.*** The groups included a random sample of 10 seventh and 10 eighth graders, and a group of about 10 combined seventh and eighth graders, selected by the principal, assistant principal, and SRO, who had dealt with the SRO personally. School guidance counselors moderated the groups, which included a significant focus on the SRO program.

The results for the school years 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 suggested that the focus group participants generally found the program helpful. The students participating in the 2000-2001 focus groups said that they—and their parents—overwhelmingly liked having an SRO in school and felt safer because of his presence. Comments from students included statements like "They [other students] feel good about John Jameson and safer" and "He's very visible."

***These findings—which the school district shared with school board members—helped convince school district administrators to continue to ask the school board each year to maintain funding for the program.*** The results also pointed out the need for improvements in the program (see the box "By Identifying Needed Improvements . . .").

#### **By Identifying Needed Improvements, Focus Groups Made It Possible to Make the Program Even More Attractive to School Administrators**

School District 54 gives the results of its annual focus groups to each school for purposes of goal setting. For example, the early focus groups showed that students saw the SROs as law enforcers. As a result, the program coordinator reminded the SROs of the need to spend more time on building relationships with students. The focus groups also indicated a need to address bullying and sexual harassment. As a result, the SROs added these topics to their classroom offerings.

The focus groups were discontinued after the 2001-2002 school year because they had served their purposes of convincing the board of the program's value and identifying areas needing improvement when the SROs were new at the job. In addition, the process and logistics for conducting the focus groups are arduous. However, the district may resume them for the 2004-2005 school year because there will be two new SROs.

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## **Because of a Budget Deficit, the School District Asked the Police Department to Pay a Larger Share of the Program Costs**

When a budget crunch forced the school board in 2002 to discuss laying off teachers, the idea of dropping or cutting back the SRO program was never raised. However, things changed in 2003. That year, the school district approached the Village of Schaumburg (which funds the police department) to explain that, because of a severe financial crisis and the resulting need to try to save teaching positions, it could no longer contribute three-quarters of the program's funding. (A nearby school district had already abandoned its SRO program.) The district had already frozen its instructional budget for six years, and it was retiring teachers with 30 years' experience and either not replacing them or replacing them with entry-level—and less expensive—teachers. The school district's funding, derived largely from property taxes, was curtailed by a cap on its ability to raise taxes; in addition, State aid for schools had declined.

Initially, the school district asked the police department to obtain grant funding for the SROs, but the department pointed out that COPS in Schools grant cannot be used to support existing SROs. Furthermore, the village was experiencing fiscal problems itself because it was committed to funding a new convention center and at the same time confronting a decline in sales tax revenue.

The school district then surveyed some other SRO programs in Illinois and discovered that program costs were split evenly between the police department (or town) and the school district. As a result, the school board in a presentation to the village council's health and safety committee and in a meeting with the village manager (who proposes the budget to the village council) asked the village to adopt the same formula. Sergeant Jerry Thommes, the police department's program supervisor, also made a presentation to the village trustees and safety committee urging them to retain the program. The negotiations lasted several months.

Eventually, the village agreed to increase its contribution to half the program's costs ***because of the widespread support for the program among parents that would have made it politically unwise to abandon the program.*** Furthermore, the village and police department still had a financial incentive to continue the program because the school district would continue to fund 50 percent of five SROs for nine months of the year, making it possible to in effect keep these officers for about half price.

In turn, the elected school board members agreed to continue to fund the other half primarily for the same reason the village did—***widespread program support among parents who might have objected vociferously (and at the ballot box) if the program were abandoned.*** According to one participant, "No one wanted to

be singled out in the media as having to accept responsibility for the program's demise." Another participant said that, if the program were dropped, "There could have been a backlash from residents." In addition, some school board members with children in the schools had an especially informed understanding of the program's value. Finally, according to one participant, "the school board is comfortable with having cops in the building in case an incident arises—and the SROs do a great job of anticipating problems."

The police department itself lost no money or personnel despite the school district's reduced contribution, because the department's funding level from the village did not change. According to one source, although the village lost 25 percent of the contribution that the school district had been paying into its general fund, it was able to achieve economies elsewhere to offset the loss, for example, by merging the health and public works departments into a single department. In addition, because of a hiring freeze in the police department, several positions were unfilled whose salaries, as a result, were not being funded.

### **Case Study: Stark County, Ohio, Sheriff's Office** (100 sworn officers)

In the process of designing its SRO programs, the Stark County Sheriff's Office requested suggestions from school administrators in its partnering school districts, as well as from leaders at other area schools, on the types of problems that a deputy might help them to manage. School administrators have continued to play a significant role in the program's operation, participating in the screening and selection of SROs and in defining the officers' roles and responsibilities. ***The administrators' involvement contributed to their willingness to support funding the program after the COPS in Schools grant ran out.***

### **Budget Cutbacks Forced the Sheriff to Stop the Program**

In January 2003, a fiscal crisis, a weakening economy, and a shrinking county budget combined to endanger the program's continuation. After voters defeated a proposed sales tax increase, the sheriff's office was forced to lay off over 40 employees as well as the entire detective bureau. These cuts prompted the agency to recall its five SROs to redeploy them to conventional patrol. In turn, the sheriff's office also had to give up its COPS in Schools grant after only two-and-one-half years in the middle of the 2002-2003 school year because the grant cannot be used to pay for road deputies.

As a result, the sheriff's office told the school districts that they would have to pick up most of the cost of SROs if they wanted the program to continue. The department and the school districts then engaged in protracted negotiations over the amount of the schools' contributions, with each side trying to pay as little as possible (with the exception noted below). According to Major Rick Perez, the program supervisor who conducted the negotiations, "There was a chance the school districts would not fund the deputies. It went down to the wire."

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Four of the five school districts found the money. Their motivation was concern to maintain safety in the schools and because students, parents, and teachers all felt safer with a deputy in the schools. In addition, one school district that had reduced its serious truancy rate significantly at least in part as a result of the efforts of its SRO to catch truants was concerned the rate would go back up without the SRO.

The one school district that did not continue the program would have had to lay off a teacher to afford the SRO. In addition, residents in the school district have a history of resisting tax increases to enhance school programs and services. Only after many years of attempts by the school district did local residents recently approve its first tax levy to fund a badly needed new high school.

### **Plain Local School District Managed to Find the Money—Three Times**

One of the four school districts that found the money illustrates the difficulties and possibilities school systems face in trying to sustain an SRO program. According to Major Perez, after the schools in the district had gone without their SROs for three weeks ***"the principals had a revolt because they had become dependent on the SROs over the preceding two-and-one-half years."*** They liked the real sense of security the SRO brought to the staff even though he was spread out over 11 buildings. They did not want to go through the second half of the school year without an SRO in the schools. They appreciated the SRO's preventive role even more, including handling calls from parents for help."

Still, there was a lot of negotiating among the sheriff's office, town trustees, and superintendent over who could pay what to fund the SRO for the rest of the school year. The township said it could not pay because it was facing cuts after residents of the town had defeated a special tax. As a result, the superintendent of schools made the decision to pay for the SRO. The town treasurer, hired by the board of education as its fiscal manager, approved the \$20,851 needed for the remainder of the 2002-2003 school year.

The next school year, 2003-2004, the superintendent and treasurer convinced the three town trustees and the township administrator that it was "their turn" to provide the funding "for protecting the students." According to Mark Cozy, Chief Township Administrative Officer of Plain Township, who is appointed by the township's three elected trustees, ***the schools kept statistics that they presented to the trustees and chief administrator officer documenting that, although arrests had gone up since the SRO began working in the schools, expulsions had gone down and the graduation rate had increased.*** In addition, school administrators strongly advocated for retaining the SRO. Finally, the sheriff's office (with which the township contracts for general law enforcement services) strongly supported the program. As a result, the trustees and administrator agreed to provide the \$42,000 for the 9-month school year, with the sheriff's office paying the SRO's salary during the three summer months.

The school board and trustees agreed to split the cost of the SRO for the 2004-2005 school year. The trustees pay the sheriff the full cost of the SRO, and the school board reimburses the trustees half the expense. Each party sacrificed to be able to contribute its share: the school board cut back on its hiring plans, while the trustees decided to lease, instead of buy (as originally planned), the new cruisers the sheriff's office needed.

### **Fairless Local School District Found Money From Diverse Sources**

In 1996, Richard Hull, when he was the high school principal, developed a Community Care Team for the Stark County Fairless Local School District high school. The team consists of teachers, a mental health counselor, a drug prevention expert, a truancy officer—and the school's SRO. The team seeks to overcome the obstacles that prevent at-risk students from obtaining an education.

When the sheriff told the district it would have to increase its contributions to its SRO's salary and fringe benefits, Hull was able to come up with the funds from multiple sources. First, he was able to secure one-third of the total needed contribution—\$16,000—from the school district's general fund. Hull raised the remaining funds from the David Foundation, which provides grants to public charities that assist underprivileged and disadvantaged children in Stark County, the local chapter of the United Way, and an individual donor.

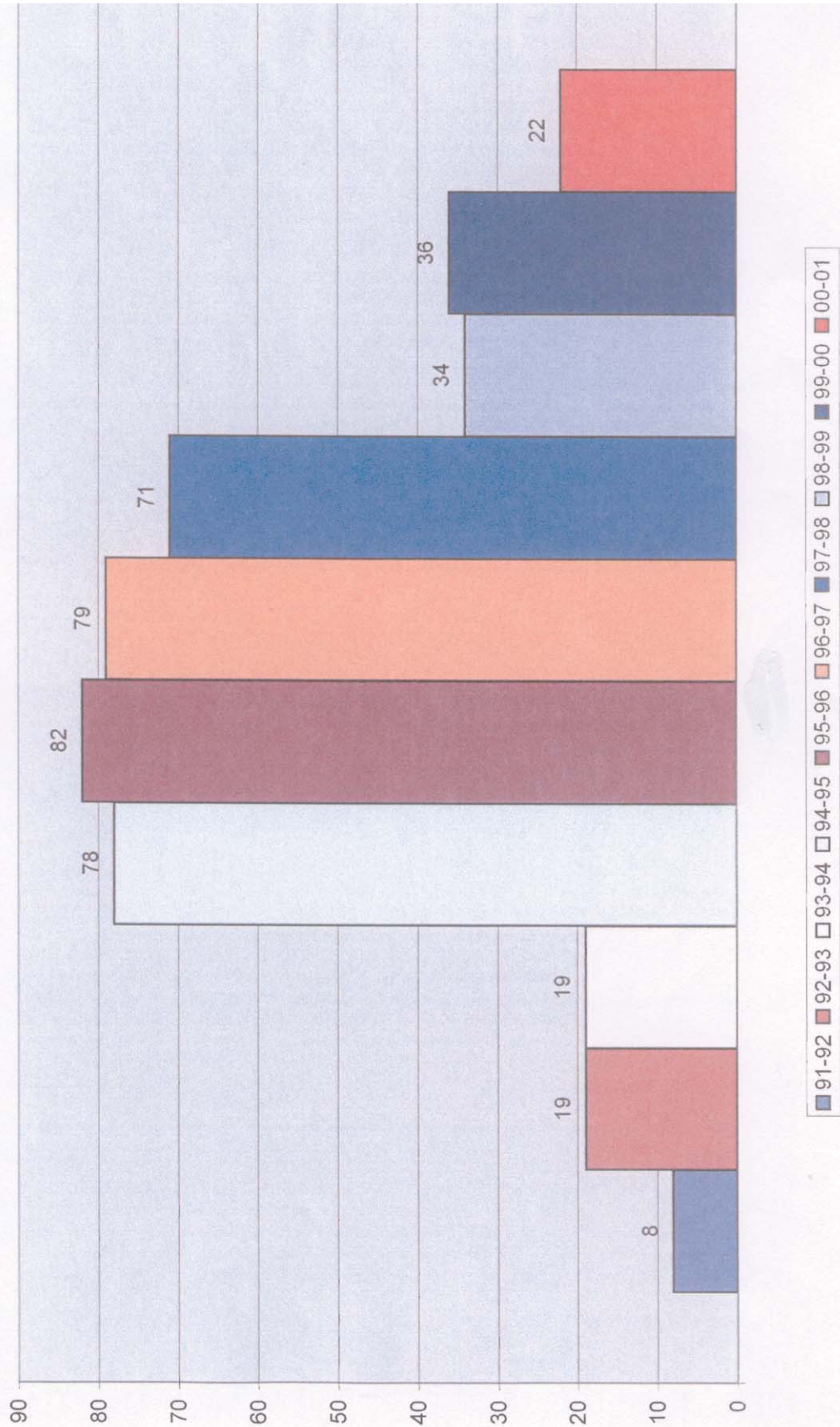


## Appendix A

### Graph of Reported Incidents by Year at One Junior High School

#### Reported Incidents

March 1991 / April 2001



Note: Program began during the 1994-95 school year.

## Appendix B

### Comparison of Performance Scores among Palm Beach, Florida, School District School Support Services

#### Overall Performance Scores of Support Service Areas FY03 Survey of Support Services to Schools

(The overall performance score is calculated based a range of 1-5 with 5 being the highest score.)

